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COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE,
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March 19, 2020

The Honorable Stephen Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Administrator Dickson,

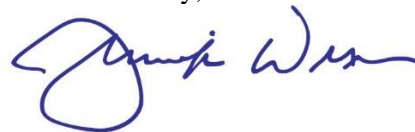
I write today with grave concern for the health of the FAA workforce, airspace safety, and national security during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through contact with several of my constituents who work for the FAA in various facilities throughout my district in Northern Virginia, I have learned that these facilities are not taking the necessary precautions to minimize risk of the spread of COVID-19, putting their personal health and the continuity of operations in serious danger.

Specifically, non-essential employees are not being required to telework, resulting in high numbers of employees continuing to work in close quarters. This reality goes against the calls for social distancing by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the order by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam to avoid gatherings of ten or more people when possible. When my office contacted the FAA with these concerns, we received word that "no action is required until a case is confirmed positive by a medical authority" and that the extent of action taken so far has been to advise facilities to make local purchases of cleaning supplies while the FAA takes steps to find other sources of cleaning products and establish enhanced cleaning protocols.

Given the reality of the national emergency and the fact that the COVID-19 virus can leave its host asymptomatic while spreading from person to person, the actions taken by the FAA to date are unacceptable. Air traffic controllers have already tested positive for COVID-19 in Chicago and Las Vegas, resulting in temporary shutdowns of air traffic control towers and reduced operations at airports. If such a shutdown were to occur in the highly complex airspace surrounding Washington DC, the implications for national security would be dire.

Air traffic controllers and their support staff are vital to the safety and security of our airspace and their health and safety should not be jeopardized as is currently being done. I request that you take urgent action to protect the FAA workforce by mandating telework for all non-essential employees to limit the number of staff who come in contact with each other as much as possible. Please respond to my office with a specific plan of action as soon as possible. I thank you for your work to safeguard the FAA workforce and preserve airspace safety and national security.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress